

The biggest sacrifices veterans have made for their country do not just happen on the battlefield. They happen quietly, without fanfare, without recognition. They happen in small homes and living rooms, with only those left behind as witnesses. Everything a veteran must do is a sacrifice, from leaving behind their lives, to stepping onto the battlefield. The sacrifice of time is just as important as the bravery shown in war, and oftentimes much more difficult. These sacrifices are what make veterans special.

Veterans became veterans because they possessed the honor, bravery, and patriotism that they needed to stand up for their country. These men and women represent everything that we, as a nation, fight to protect, everything we value in life. Our honor, our liberty, our livelihood, lies with them.

Our nation's veterans pledge their lives to our defense, so that, in their absence, we can continue to live in freedom, and enjoy our time in life. Veterans are separate from our everyday struggles. They represent our country as a whole, people of every belief coming together and standing strong.

They do not pledge themselves to us simply because it is their duty. They have a deep-seated belief that this country is worth fighting for, and they volunteer to be the ones to step forward in its protection. The patriotism in their hearts is what allows everyday life to continue unimpeded; it is how they advance and do what they must for the good of the country as a whole, not just what they would want themselves.

The veterans in our country show the most valued trait in civic virtue; selflessness, the ability to put their entire country before themselves as individuals. Veterans devote their entire lives to the improvement of society, in the hope that we do

not befall the same mistakes as those before us. Veterans are those who have volunteered themselves for their country, they are the people we salute every day, the men and women we respect in the highest honor.

America's veterans choose their path knowing the difficulties it will hold, knowing the sacrifices they will be required to make, fully aware that they may never return, but safe in the knowledge that they are supported by their country.

Our veterans are special because they alone understand the true cost of freedom, and are willing to pay that price so that our posterity may enjoy the benefits of that freedom, and so our country can continue its legacy far beyond our imaginings.

## Extraordinary Veterans

What makes veterans extraordinary is how ordinary they appear to be. Veterans might be somebody's uncle, mother, daughter or brother. A veteran may be a father that teaches his son how to fix his car. A veteran could be a child's grandfather who turns down his hearing aid when he doesn't want to listen to his wife. What you don't realize is that the father's mechanical skills come from repairing a ship's engine for 25 hours straight during the Korean War, and the grandfather lost his hearing from artillery fire in World War I. The quiet, ordinary lives of veterans belie their courage and sacrifices they made for this country.

Not a lot of people could pick a veteran out from a crowd. They don't walk around decked out in medals, or brag about what they have experienced. You can't see what they've seen, or know what they know. All of this seems to be locked in a vault somewhere inside of them, and no one is allowed to see. How, then, are we supposed to distinguish these veterans from ordinary people? How are we supposed to honor them for what they've accomplished for our country through courage and valor? Can it be that veterans don't expect us to recognize them for what they've done? Veterans could just be exceptional people who don't seek exceptional treatment.

Look around you. Look for that ordinary individual that may not be so ordinary. Look for that person who doesn't stand out in a crowd but deserves to. Look for that selfless individual who gave more than most of us dream of giving. Recognize that person who didn't seek recognition. You never know, that mother, father, daughter, brother, or grandfather may be a veteran, and veterans are extraordinary no matter how ordinary they appear to be.

### Why are Veterans Special?

Doc Hastings once said, "We owe our World War II veterans - and all our veterans - a debt we can never fully repay." But why is this? Why do we owe people that we don't even know? Could the reason be because of the sacrifices they made or the bravery they showed? Could it be for the tough times they have gone through and still have to go through? Maybe we owe our veterans for a much simpler reason. Maybe we owe them for not being extra ordinary, but for being extraordinary. Maybe we owe veterans simply for being special.

Many people ask why others risk their lives. Countless stories have been told about people losing not just their lives, but their limbs, identity, and even their mental abilities. The question is, therefore, why risk even the chance of this happening? Why not let others fight while you just sit back and watch? Many people choose to sit back, but what makes veterans special is that they chose to go into action. Some might have enlisted because of the influence of family; others, because they felt that they had to protect themselves or their loved ones. Some veterans chose to enlist in the armed services because they felt patriotic. There are many reasons why veterans have chosen to join the military, but that doesn't mean any reason is less special than the others. Anytime anyone risks losing themselves for the purpose of the greater good, it is special. Veterans have done this time and time again in their lives. This continuous act results in changing others' lives.

Country artist Keith Urban wrote a song saying, "I would give my life... I would make that sacrifice. Cause if it came down to it, could I take the bullet, yes I would. For you." Many people don't have the type of bravery to take a bullet for another person or group of people. Imagine strapping on boots that you know could be torn right off your feet. Imagine jumping out of an airplane behind enemy lines. Imagine living on a US aircraft carrier fearing the threat of underwater mines every day. Think of the bravery it would take to be in any of those scenarios. Many veterans have their own memories like

Grant Sykuta

that. Many veterans are brave and return home to tell the tale... but countless stories tell of veterans who are brave that don't make it back home. Veterans have that rare bravery, and that's what makes them set apart from the rest.

So why do we owe these people? Do we owe them for protecting our freedoms, or risking their lives for us and our country? Do we owe them for the great number of sacrifices they have made in their lives, or for their rare bravery which they possess? Maybe we owe veterans for not being ordinary. We owe them for being extraordinary. Or maybe we owe veterans for just a much simpler reason—we owe veterans because they are special.

## Peace from Sacrifice

Ethan Forte

War makes a great plot for book or movie, but few people have actually had to go through the pain, and suffering that it can bring upon a human being. Whether it is a medic having to tend to a body that has been mutilated and broken, or a soldier watching a fellow comrade die in battle, to suffering an injury themselves, veterans have endured.

When people are active in the military, they are usually away from family and friends. While they are fighting across seas, in distant countries, risking their lives for their own country, the majority of American citizens are enjoying the peace that comes from their sacrifice. America has not seen war in its own country since the Civil War between the Union and the Confederacy. We have been kept safe from outside threats because of the veterans who have served in our country. If not for them we may not be living in the free, independent, first world we find ourselves in today.

Veterans have endured, and sacrificed. Terrorists and other threats have opposed our country time and again, but because of the veterans we are safe. Veterans have fought for us and kept our country free and because of them we are free. Veterans have sacrificed their time, their wellbeing, and even their lives. We remember, honor, and respect veterans for all that they have done for their country and will always hold a special place in our hearts. Without veterans who have fought for those around them, America would not be the same.

## America Is Beautiful

Not too long ago I visited the Veteran's Hospital to deliver thank you cards to the veterans. As I walked down the halls of the hospital, it all came to life in front of me. There I was, standing on the battlefield or crawling through a ditch dodging death and trying to drown out the noise of gunfire with thoughts of home. Coming back to reality, I turned the corner with some of my peers as the nurse led us down another hallway. This time, more of the rooms were open so we could go in and say hello and drop off some cards of appreciation to the veterans. As I walked into the door, I was a little nervous. I don't have the best time talking to people I don't know, I've always been that way. But as I started up conversation with a veteran, it became easy. And when it came to giving the thank you cards and moving on to the next room, I was genuine. We all are. Just being in the same room as a veteran was a complete honor.

Every room told a different story. Each veteran was honorable in their own way. All veterans are, regardless of their circumstances. Being there and writing cards to the veterans made me realize how incredibly important they are to our country. Veterans have risked their lives to fight for our country. They fought for peace and justice, and devoting your live to fight for the peace and justice of others is something huge worth honoring. Veterans everywhere, even at the hospitals, should walk with pride and glory, knowing what they've done. Knowing they've changed the lives of millions. One man's work can save thousands.

This got me to thinking that people should do this every day. Veterans should get nationally more recognition, especially through schools. Our nation takes much pride in our veterans, and loves them very much, but even more could be done. Even if it's just taking time out of your day to write them letters to be delivered. Veterans deserve the utmost respect, appreciation, acknowledgment, and glory.

# America Is Beautiful

After spending years of their life dedicated to us as citizens, we as citizens should pay it back to them by giving them what they deserve. America is beautiful, and our veterans had a huge impact on making America beautiful.

## **Courageous for our Freedom**

“The secret of freedom is courage.” This apt quote by Thucydides is to me the essence of freedom. And the ones courageous enough to have fought for my freedom are veterans. War demands a special kind of courage, both physical and moral. You see willingness to risk life and limb, and strength to endure hardships with admirable determination. The cost of my freedom was high, but it is my honor to be able to thank a veteran for their service in protecting my freedom.

Veterans impact us everywhere in our daily lives. Both of my parents are veterans, and I normally see at least one person with a veteran’s patch on at the grocery store. So, as you can see, veterans are everyday people dispersed throughout our lives. They are not some person that nobody knows; they are our family members, our friends, our coworkers. These courageous people are very real in our lives, and it takes unwavering loyalty to ones country to leave behind family, life, and home to serve in protecting our freedom.

Freedom is a precious gift. It takes the courage and sacrifice of thousands to attain, and many more to keep. I cannot imagine what hardships veterans had to endure, but it is with gratefulness that I can stand here today as a free person, living in such a way that I can bring honor to those who have sacrificed so much for me. It takes a very special kind of person to be a veteran, so honor our veterans for what they have done and who they are.

# **Veterans Essay**

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Your loved ones are always just a phone call away. Every night you sleep in a warm bed with all your comforts of home surrounding you. Then the next day you go to work and watch the clock till it's time to leave. You complain about the small things, people you don't like, something that didn't go your way, the waitress hasn't brought your food fast enough, or there's a bug on your windshield. In truth all of your problems are as small as that bug.

We live in a nation forged from freedom and we owe our lives to the people who bled and died for this pure land. We are all connected, a quote from Common Sense by Thomas Paine says, "It matters not where you live, or what rank of life you hold, the evil or the blessing will reach you all. The far and the near, the home countries and the back, the rich and the poor will suffer and rejoice alike."

Materialistic ideas rule our lives but "it's our dearness only that gives everything its value." Our values in life have shifted and we need to take some time to appreciate what is really dear. Objects don't last forever but freedom will always be there, same as relationships for they hold steadfast from our lifetime into the next.

Be thankful for everything that you have, because if it weren't for the many veterans who have lived and died fighting for us, you would have nothing. They are the sole foundation that holds us together and they will be there time and time again to preserve our freedom.

Forever and Always  
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He missed them so much; their light, their smiles, their ways. His wife and his little boy, Dylan, oh how they grieved in his heart. He wanted to go home now. He didn't want to wait any longer; but then again he couldn't complain, it would only be 2 more days till his four years were up and he could rightfully go home.

He reflected on the Vietnam War. What a terrible war it had been. So much blood and tears and pain. His wife had said people change in war, for this is why she never wanted him to leave; but he felt obligated. He knew he had to. Like a dog should come to the whistle of its owner, he must obey his country's call. She begged him not to leave; for her; for their at the time 8 year old son, he would be 12 in a month and 9 days. The thought of missing his past birthdays sickened him. His son did not want him to go, but he never did beg. He simply said, "Goodbye, Daddy. I love you." His sons words echoed in his head, my oh my how he needed to be home.

Today was the day. His four years rang done. He was already on a plane, on his way back to Missouri. He missed his home-town too. Columbia didn't have a lot to offer, but his family did. He could smell the vast un-desired Missouri atmosphere already. He had a 20 hour flight. He didn't want to wait on this crowded plain any longer. He wanted to hold his wife and provide for her like he was supposed to. He wanted to embrace his son; and to see the man he was growing up to be. The only communication he had with his family was letters his wife had written to him and him replying back as quickly as possible. The last letter he sent was about 2 months ago. He guessed it failed to reach her; for she usually responded three weeks after his letters. Why did she

not answer? These ideas drowned his thoughts and worried him, but he tried to keep them out of his mind. He was going home!

Before he could take the first step into his familiar driveway, the door that played its familiar squeaking-tune slammed open. Out ran his little boy. "Daddy!" he cried. All he knew in that moment was the feeling of his son's warm embrace. He stroked his hair as he whispered gentle I miss you's. He looked up at the door once again to see his wife. He ran to her. They kissed each other passionately, and he decided right then that he could never leave again. He looked into the eyes of his family gently, and murmured, "For our family is forever and always, and I will always love you both. I will never leave again."